

# SMITHFIELD RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

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## BLACKSTONE VALLEY HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY



**Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission  
Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission**

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## **PROJECT TEAM**

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### **Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission**

Richard E. Greenwood, Ph.D., Deputy Director

### **Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission**

Joanna Doherty, Community Planner

### **Project Consultants**

Gretchen G. Schuler

Shary Page Berg

### **Local Project Coordinator**

Michael Phillips, Town Planner

**December 2010**

### **Cover Photographs:**

Captain Elisha Steere Farm, Burial Ground Number 38, Greenville Baptist Church

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## CONTENTS

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<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Regional Historical Themes</b> .....	2
<b>Smithfield History</b> .....	3
<b>Priority Heritage Landscapes.</b> .....	5
Austin Avenue Agricultural Area	
Camp Shepard	
Captain Elisha Steere Farm	
Esmond Village	
George Washington Grove	
Greenville	
Nipsachuck Battle Area	
<b>Regional Critical Concerns.</b> .....	16
Agricultural Landscapes	
Burial Grounds	
Civic and Institutional Properties	
Lakes, Ponds and Reservoirs	
Local Scenic Roads	
Mill Villages	
Stone Walls	
<b>General Preservation Planning Recommendations</b> .....	18
Survey of Heritage Landscapes	
National Register Program	
Community-Wide Preservation and Zoning Strategies	
Agricultural Landscapes	
Burial Grounds	
Civic and Institutional Properties	
Lakes, Ponds and Reservoirs	
Local Scenic Roads	
Mill Villages	
Stone Wall Preservation	
Funding of Preservation Projects	
<b>Conclusions.</b> .....	28
<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>A. Heritage Landscapes Identified by Community</b> .....	29
<b>B. Existing Resource Documentation and Planning Tools</b> .....	35
Survey of Historic and Architectural Resources	
State and National Registers of Historic Places	
Planning Documents and Tools	

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor includes 24 communities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts that are linked by a common geography and by historical events that helped to shape the Industrial Revolution, which is central to America's economic, social and political development. Five Rhode Island communities – Burrillville, Glocester, Lincoln, North Smithfield and Smithfield – have joined together to participate in a study of their shared legacy, a rich cultural heritage that represents the dynamic interaction between nature and culture.

Heritage landscapes are special places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past. They are dynamic and evolving; they reflect the region's history and provide a sense of place; they include the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns; and they often have scenic qualities. These landscapes are central to each community's character, yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first steps towards their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by each community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive mill village, a unique Native American site or an important river corridor. The program is funded by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (BRVNHCC).

The primary goal of the program is to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected. The focus is on connecting landscapes to show how they are part of the larger heritage landscape that is the defining character of a community. Another important goal of the program is to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The methodology for Heritage Landscape Inventory programs was developed in Massachusetts and is outlined in the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's publication *Reading the Land*. This methodology, which was used to study Blackstone River Valley communities in Massachusetts in 2007, has provided a baseline for the HLI program in Rhode Island. In each community the town planner served as the Local Project Coordinator (LPC) to assist the RIHPHC-BRVNHCC consulting team. The LPC organized a heritage landscape identification meeting at which interested residents and town officials offered input by identifying heritage landscapes. This meeting was followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team and the LPC, often accompanied by other community members. This group visited the priority landscapes identified in the meeting and gathered information about the community. The final product is this Reconnaissance Report, prepared for each participating community.

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## REGIONAL HISTORICAL THEMES

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Each of the five communities participating in the program is unique, yet there are strong connections in their historic patterns of development – the ways in which the land was used and in which that history emerges today.

Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley is located in the northern part of the state and comprises cities like Providence and Pawtucket as well as small towns. The rich natural resources of this region attracted and supported Native Americans for thousands of years. Narragansetts, Nipmucks and Wampanoags moved through the area fishing along the rivers, hunting in the uplands, and they established settlements where they cultivated crops and left behind burial and ceremonial sites.

Although this region was considered part of the Providence Plantation established in 1636, it was not until the late 1660s and early 1670s, just before the King Philip's War, that Europeans began to establish themselves in the Blackstone Valley. Early farms were supported by grist and saw mills on the many rivers that flowed through these communities. In 1731 the study area (Burrillville, Glocester, Lincoln, North Smithfield and Smithfield) separated from the town of Providence to become Smithfield and Glocester.

The water power at the early mill sites was a key factor in the shift of the region's solely agrarian economy to a new base of textile mills and agriculture. This began with the 1793 Slater Mill in Pawtucket and was quickly followed by many small mill villages which were the nucleus of development throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rise in the textile industry led to expansion of the agrarian economy to sustain the mill villages.

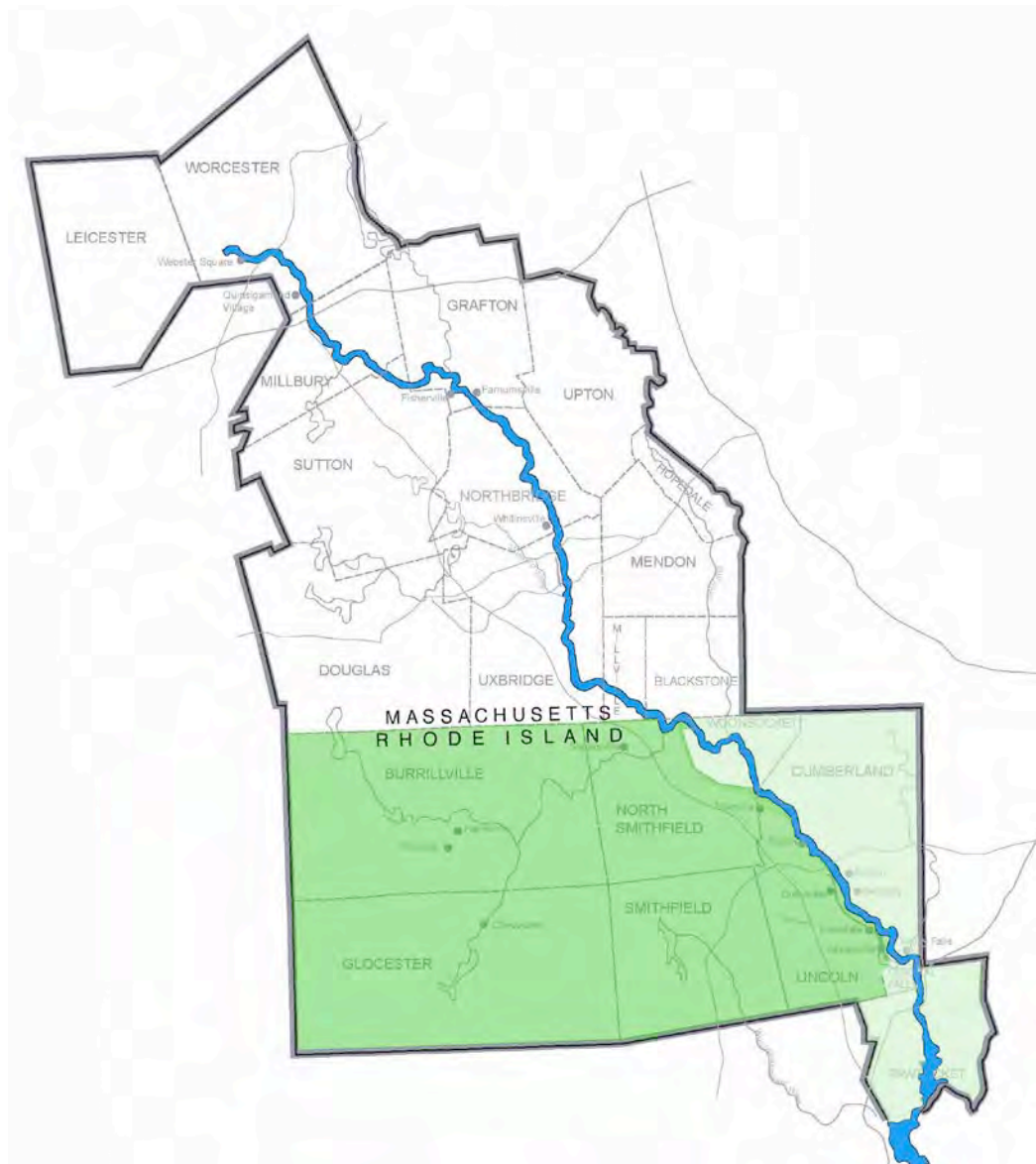
Transportation patterns connecting the villages and their mills were important to the growth of the region. Several main routes followed old Indian trails and eventually were supplemented by the first turnpikes. The Blackstone Canal was constructed in 1824-1828 roughly paralleling the Blackstone River, and serviced the mills and villages in the valley.

Most of the towns flourished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a wider variety of industrial activities taking place – initially small-scale mills but by mid century larger mill complexes, most of which took advantage of the water power provided by the extensive network of rivers and streams. It was during this era that the present day village centers, which remain focal points in all five communities, emerged. Many of the communities developed their social infrastructure in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – schools, granges, churches, burial grounds.

The early twentieth century brought better transportation systems – improved roads for the new travel modes of automobiles as well as trolleys – and new recreational use of the region's many lakes. However, at the same time came the decline of industrial activity in the Northeast, hence the reduction in use of the many large mill structures.

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The second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought further improvements to the transportation system and new patterns of suburban development. The decline of industrial activity continued except in a few instances where modern companies such as Tupperware reused factory buildings. Other businesses that have helped to sustain the regional economy include institutions, corporate headquarters, and local commerce necessary in all communities. Today, many of the region's residents commute to Providence.



- Blackstone River
- Participating Communities
- Other Rhode Island Communities in Blackstone Valley

## BLACKSTONE VALLEY HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

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## SMITHFIELD HISTORY

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Native Americans, including the Narragansett, Nipmuck and Wampanoag tribes, occupied Smithfield for thousands of years. Rivers such as the Woonasquatucket and Stillwater were fertile ground for fishing, hunting, gathering and some agriculture. Smithfield was part of the Providence Plantation from 1636, but European settlers did not arrive until ca. 1666 when some moved out from Providence. Battles of King Philip's War took place in the vicinity of Nipsachuck Swamp; at a time when colonists had just begun to move into this Tribal area. However, with Philip's death and the defeat of his allies in 1676 more European settlers moved to the western territories. In 1731 Smithfield was set off from Providence and initially included North Smithfield, Lincoln, Central Falls, and Woonsocket west of the Blackstone River. In 1871 the other towns were established, leaving Smithfield with its present borders.

Despite the rocky soil which was difficult to clear, agriculture was the mainstay of the economy in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The early water-powered saw and grist mills and iron manufactories became the nuclei of the early manufacturing villages. Industrialization resulted in nine textile mills by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century with mill villages firmly established at Esmond, Georgiaville, Greenville, Spragueville, Stillwater and West Greenville. While the mill villages came into their own, agriculture was booming with farmers specializing in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in fruits, market gardening and dairy.

As in nearby towns, the early roads followed presumed Native American trails. The first major east-west route in Smithfield was Austin Avenue, then called Killingly Road. In ca. 1733 a road was laid out connecting Connecticut with Providence called the Great Country Road or Providence-Woodstock Pike. It was improved in 1788 and became the Putnam Pike as Smithfield's first toll road. Other toll roads with gates and taverns at strategic locations were Providence Pike (1807) and Farnum Pike (1808, 1844). These linked farms and mill villages with towns and cities beyond Smithfield. In 1873 the Providence & Springfield Railroad (discontinued in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) passed through Esmond, Georgiaville and Stillwater improving transportation to and from the mills. In 1933 the George Washington Highway was constructed to accommodate the automobile. Its viaduct over the Woonasquatucket River and the Providence & Springfield Railroad provided connections north of the Farnum Pike.

In addition to the early colonists from Providence, some Quakers from Massachusetts came here to escape persecution. First families in Smithfield were the Angells, Steeres, Smiths, Applebys, and Farnums, all engaged in farming and in shaping the community. Two centuries later at the time of the Civil War when the mills were flourishing, the immigrant population rose to 38% of the total number of persons living in Smithfield with many Roman Catholics from Ireland and Canada. After the Civil War and during prosperous industrial times the population rose to nearly 2,800 in 1875, but dropped slightly to 2,100 in 1895 and then more than doubled in the next 50 years to 4,600 by 1940. Suburbanization of Smithfield led to a population increase to about 10,600 by the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## **PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES**

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Smithfield's Heritage Landscape Identification meeting was held on June 17, 2010. During the meeting residents compiled a lengthy list of the town's heritage landscapes, which is included in Appendix A. Attendees were then asked to articulate the value of each landscape and the issues relating to its preservation. Based on the information gathered, community members identified a group of priority landscapes to be visited by the consulting team during the fieldwork. Each of the priority landscapes is highly valued, contributes to community character and is not permanently protected or preserved.

These landscapes, which are listed alphabetically, represent a range of scales and types of resources from individual properties to an entire mill village. Several include areas that have multiple layers. For example a mill village that is considered a heritage landscape may also include specific features that are individually recognized as heritage landscapes. Such layering shows the complexity and interdependence that are characteristic of most heritage landscapes. The descriptions and recommendations included here are an initial step in identifying resources valued by the community and suggesting action strategies.

### **Austin Avenue Agricultural Area**

The Austin Avenue agricultural area, located just north of West Greenville near the Gloucester border, is a collection of contiguous farms that evoke the agrarian heritage of Smithfield. While owned by the Winsor and Waterman families in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the farms produced rye, Irish potatoes and Indian corn, as well as dairy products. The farm of Jesse Foster and later his son, John Foster's farm (147 Austin Avenue) is reported to have produced the largest amount of corn and butter in Smithfield in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; at about the same time Thomas K. Winsor had orchards with 1,500 apple trees on his Austin Avenue farm. The farms were purchased ca. 1930 by the Steere Family who established extensive orchards; the area came to be the biggest producer of apples in Rhode Island.

Today the Austin Avenue agricultural area is characterized by acre after acre of apple orchards (along with some peach) as well as many acres of now fallow land. Several historic farm complexes survive, including notable farmhouses, outbuildings, a ca. 1930s apple storage facility that is still actively used, and historic stone walls. Some farms also pursue market gardening

The Waterman-Foster Farm is located at 147 Austin Avenue, at the corner of Austin Avenue and Mapleville Road. It includes a fine 18<sup>th</sup> century, two-and-one-half story, center-chimney dwelling with an elaborate frontispiece at its center entrance. The orchard behind the house along Mapleville Road is presently being reclaimed. The Eleanor Hoar Farm is located a short distance to the west, at 159 Austin Avenue, and includes a ca. 1920s, one-and-one-half story house with long rear ell, several barns and foundations, and acres of agricultural fields, now largely overgrown. Once owned by the Steere family, the property



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was deeded to the Hoar family in the 1930s or 1940s. Farming on the Hoar property ceased about 20 years ago. Another nearby farm is the early to mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century, two and one-half story, center-chimney Daniel Winsor House, now known as Redwood Farm, at 129 Austin Avenue. This farm retains nearly 30 acres.

This upland area with dramatic regional views to the west retains these 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural features as well as its notable scenic character, and continues to be an agricultural center in Smithfield. Much of the area is still actively used for orchards, although there is encroachment around the perimeter and some land is no longer actively farmed, leaving it vulnerable to development.



*Austin Avenue Farms (Google Earth image)*

Solutions include:

- Land use planning that leads to preservation of agricultural fields along Austin Avenue may be an important factor in sustaining the orchards and other similar establishments. Farmers state that they continually need additional acreage for crops and orchards. Use of the Farm, Forest and Open Space Act to reduce taxes on farmland; purchase of development rights; rezoning of certain lands for agricultural business use may help to meet planning goals. See Agricultural Landscapes in **General Preservation Planning Recommendations Section** for additional information.
- Preserve road as scenic by identifying key features and adopting ordinances or standards for road improvements that preserve character – See Local Scenic Roads and Stone Wall Preservation

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in **General Preservation Planning Recommendations Section** for additional information.

- Help private property owners investigate economic advantages of conservation restrictions or purchase of development rights on farm land.
- Investigate eligibility of and interest in a National Register district to include farmland and orchards.
- Help private property owners to investigate tax credits such as the Rhode Island Home Owners Tax Credit and federal Historic Investment Tax Credit for restoration and rehabilitation of National Register properties, including

### **Camp Shepard**

Camp Shepard is located at 71 Colwell Road in Greenville and is owned by the Greater Providence YMCA and used as a summer day camp. The property is 125 acres, which includes the 23.4 acre Upper Sprague Reservoir. Buildings include a late 20<sup>th</sup> century ranch house and a large screened building used for camp activities, as well as several sheds. The entrance on Colwell Road is marked by a well preserved stone wall with stone piers through which the driveway passes.

This is an underutilized property in the rapidly growing Greenville area of Smithfield. As property values increase, there may be pressure for the YMCA to expand facilities or sell this prime piece of land, which is valued by the community for its open space values, especially the reservoir.



*Entrance to Camp Shepard*

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Solutions may include:

- Work with property owner to prepare master plan/feasibility study to explore options that would preserve at least some of this area as open space. The Smithfield Land Trust and Conservation Commission may be interested parties if the property should come on the market.

### **Captain Elisha Steere Farm**

The Captain Elisha Steere Farm at 40 West Greenville Road is named for its second owner, who bought the two and one-half story, five-bay farmhouse with Greek Revival entry from Thomas Waterman in 1817. Waterman is reported to have built the house in ca. 1810. Steere bought adjoining land and over the next century his descendants established saw, grist and cotton mills on the Stillwater River, and farmed their land which accrued through purchases over time. The farm has remained in the same family for a little over 200 years and the historical record is the envy of many a property owner.

The Captain Elisha Steere Farm is located in the southwest corner of Smithfield on the Gloucester border. The property extends westerly to the Waterman Reservoir of which only a small portion is in Smithfield (the majority is in Gloucester). The property has one of the better local collections of farmstead buildings with the dwelling house and its long rear ell resting on a slight knoll at the edge of West Greenville Road and set off by a low picket fence framing the front garden. A number of the farm buildings remain – an ice house opposite the rear ell entry, a corn crib, a small well pump structure and a long equipment shed. There is no longer a barn on the property. Agricultural fields surround the property on the west side of the road and fields that once were part of the Steere farm on the east side of the road have been converted to a housing development.

Issues confronting the owner of this farm and other surrounding farms are related in part to the economics of maintaining the historic buildings and farming activities. When there is long-term family ownership there is enormous pride in the historical record and motivation to honor that record and maintain it. However, there was a period of time in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century when farming on the Steere Farm had been abandoned and the buildings were not cared for and underused if not vacant. Reclaiming the buildings and the agricultural fields has been a challenge for the next generation owner, despite his energetic efforts to do so. While state and local policies both encourage farming, there are often conflicting regulations. Also, there is no clear roadmap as to which programs and types of assistance are available to support farming activities.

Solutions include:

- Pursue National Register nomination for farm. Request eligibility opinion from Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission.

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- Preserve agricultural fields. Land use planning that leads to preservation of agricultural fields of this farm and other surrounding farms that may be leased by owner-farmer may be an important factor in sustaining this farm and other similar establishments. Farmers state that they continually need additional acreage for crops and orchards. Use of Farm, Forest and Open Space Act to reduce taxes on farmland; purchase of development rights; rezoning of certain lands for agricultural business use may help to meet planning goals. See **Agricultural Landscapes in General Preservation Planning Recommendations Section** for additional information.
  - Help private property owner to investigate tax credits such as the Rhode Island Home Owners Credit and the federal Historic Investment Tax Credit for restoration and rehabilitation of National Register properties, including farm outbuildings.



*Outbuildings at the Elisha Steere Farm*

### **Esmond Village**

Esmond is a village that has undergone many changes due to its industrial past. First known as Allenville for the early mill owner, Governor Philip Allen, the village was established in 1813 when Allen built a cotton mill and housing for mill workers. By 1820 additions were made to the mill, more housing was added and Allen also constructed a building that served as school and church. Allen owned the mill estate until 1857. The third owner was the Enfield Mills Company, which changed the name of the village to Enfield in 1881. Manufacturing continued with little or no new development until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the mill estate was sold to the Esmond Mills Company. Much of the old was demolished to make way for a new large-scale mill building and new housing, and the village was renamed Esmond in 1909. The textile mill operated until 1948 after which a variety of businesses have occupied the mill buildings.



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The long three-story mill building on Waterman Avenue close to the Woonasquatucket River has a five-story stair tower on the road side and an old smoke stack on the river side. On the corner of Esmond Street and Dean Avenue is the Smithfield Public Library in a former three-story Colonial Revival school. Modest dwellings, including many duplexes, line many of the narrow streets in the village. The stone Allenville Co. Storehouse, dating from the first mill period (ca. 1813), is located at the edge of the Woonasquatucket River facing Esmond Street (listed in NR 1972).

There is a strong sense of place in the village which has some of the earliest mill housing in the region. Issues confronting the village are development pressures from the Route 44 corridor and concern of continued use of large mill buildings like the early 20<sup>th</sup> century structures in Esmond.



*Stone Store at Esmond*

Solutions include:

- Complete a National Register nomination for Esmond Village Historic District to provide recognition of its historical and architectural value.
- Using historical photographs and survey information develop a handbook about the history of Esmond and include residential rehabilitation design guidelines to encourage preservation and enhancement of village housing stock.
- Consider Neighborhood Conservation District protection which will help to preserve the overall sense of scale and massing of the historic structures. See Community Wide Preservation and Zoning Strategies in **General Preservation Planning Recommendations Section** for additional information.

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## George Washington Grove

This wooded area located along the George Washington Highway (Route 116) northeast of the Stillwater Reservoir is the site of a roadside picnic area built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s. The Grove encompasses a place overlooking the Woonasquatucket River that has been important in Native American culture for thousands of years. The Grove, which is 16 acres of wooded land, is owned by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and is considered surplus land. It is located next to Stillwater Park, which consists of 80 protected acres managed by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and is of interest to DEM.

Solutions may include:

- Document CCC construction of grove and add to Smithfield Historic Inventory as a heritage landscape. Evaluate for National Register eligibility.
- Retain public ownership of the archaeologically-sensitive area for permanent protection.
- Work with DOT and DEM to prepare master plan/feasibility study to explore options that would preserve at least some of this area as open space. The town, notably the Smithfield Land Trust and Conservation Commission, can be pro-active in determining the future of this property.



*Aerial view of George Washington Grove (Bing Map)*

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## Greenville

Greenville is the largest of Smithfield's villages, first established when Resolved Waterman built his house and a grist mill here in 1689. His son of the same name built a tavern when Great Country Road – now Putnam Pike – was laid out in 1733. Small textile mills replaced early grist and saw mills on the nearby Stillwater River outside of the village. The village never took on the characteristics of other mill villages, partially due to the lack of mill-owned housing. Rather, Greenville evolved into a civic and institutional center with 19<sup>th</sup> century construction including schools, churches and the Smithfield Exchange Bank, which occupied the rear ell of the Waterman Tavern until its own building was constructed.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century transportation routes were improved (Putnam Pike expanded in 1930), small mills outside the village closed and commercial development took over this area. At the center of the village there now are a number of historic buildings, but there also are many missing structures, demolished for modern commercial construction. The wood clapboard Waterman Tavern ell, recently restored and situated at the road edge, is next to the 1856 brick Smithfield Exchange Bank building which has a low hipped roof and corbelled cornice. Across the street is the 1851 stone, gable-front St. Thomas Episcopal Church with 1892 bell tower. Traveling west on Putnam Pike one passes the triangular Greenville Common on which there are plantings, a flagpole, an old watering trough and a World War I monument. The Common was given to the nearby Greenville Baptist Church in 1821 and is still owned by the church. The 1822 church displays the meetinghouse form with its gable-front façade with slightly projecting entrance pavilion and topped with a three tiered spire. South of the Common is the Mowry-Evans House, a commodious five-bay, center-entry dwelling (now a Funeral Home) with bracketed eaves. Several other brick early 20<sup>th</sup> century institutional buildings are located on Putnam Pike at the center of the village.

Issues relate to the village character that is eroding as the transportation corridors are widened to a point that they are difficult for a pedestrian to cross and buildings are demolished to make way for roadside commercial strip malls and parking.

Solutions may include:

- Review zoning ordinance for consistency with village zoning such as zero lot line setbacks, municipal parking, and height restrictions consistent with historic fabric.
- Develop sign design guidelines to augment Sign Zoning Ordinance. Offer sign design guidelines to businesses showing positive effect of consistent and compatible signage.



*Greenville Common is being eroded by increased transportation pressures*

### **Nipsachuck Battle Area**

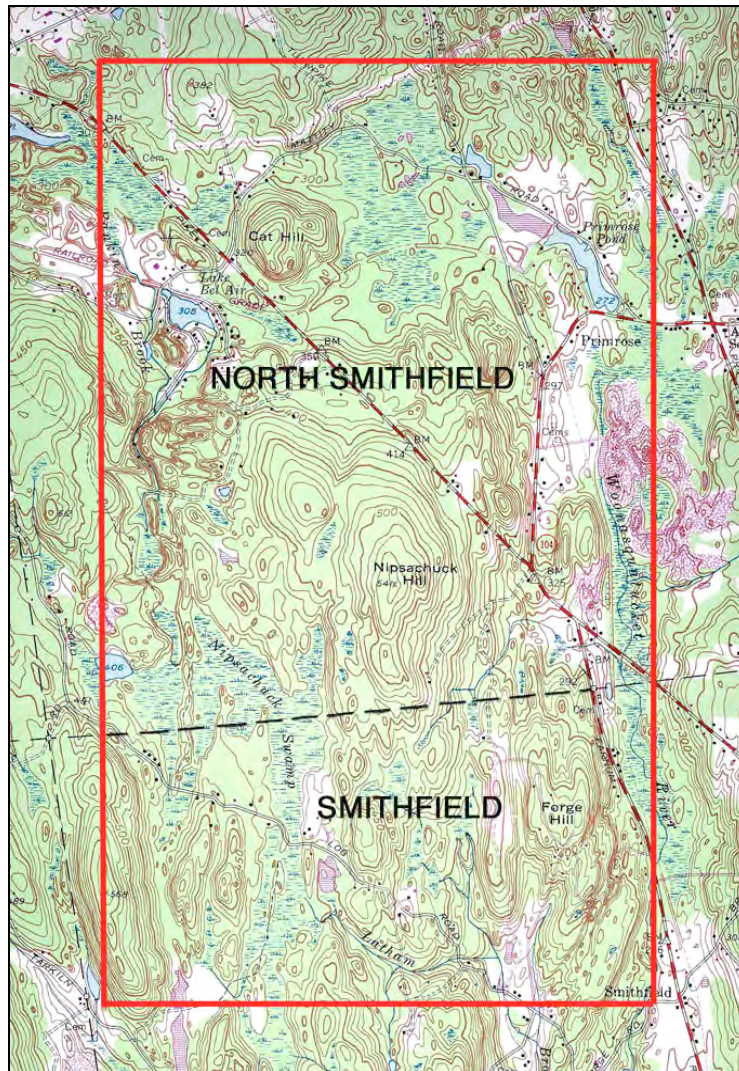
Nipsachuck is an 8,000+ acre area in the northern part of Smithfield spilling into the southwest part of North Smithfield. It is an area of large parcels of rugged upland, mostly wooded with surrounding swamp and wetlands. The acreage in Smithfield includes Nipsachuck Swamp, encompassing swamp and uplands that are largely undeveloped. In addition to the swamp area there are examples of irregular kame and kettle topography. Nipsachuck is believed to be an important site associated with Native American use for thousands of years and the site of important battles of the 1675-76 King Philip's War.

Nipsachuck is also a priority landscape in North Smithfield where there are many stone piles that are believed by the Narragansett Tribe to be associated with a sacred ceremonial landscape of the region's tribes that existed at Nipsachuck. Issues include the identification and understanding of Native American use of the land and preservation of highly sensitive and vulnerable resources.

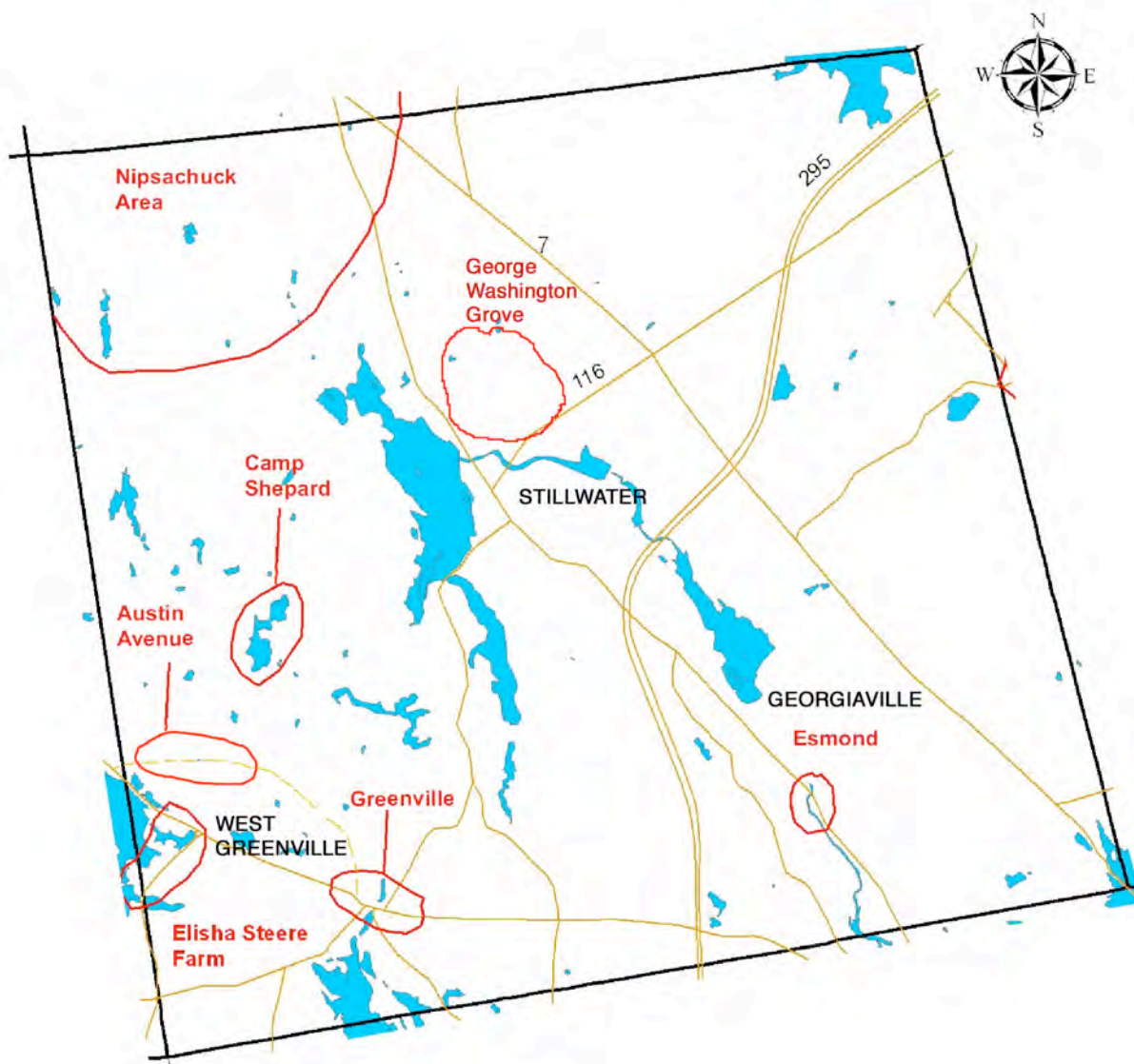
Solutions include:

- Documenting and mapping of resources, some of which is underway with a National Park Service Battlefield Protection Grant to the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, which is working in a research partnership with the Narragansett Tribal Historic Preservation Office.
- Finding solutions for private property owners such as purchase of conservation easements in order to preserve areas from development while ensuring private property owners value of their land.
- Coordination and communication between town planner, RIHPHC and THPO when development proposals for area are received by community.





*USGS map showing the approximate Nipsachuck area*



Note: Priority landscapes are shown in red

**SMITHFIELD'S PRIORITY LANDSCAPES  
BLACKSTONE VALLEY HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY**

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## **REGIONAL CRITICAL CONCERNS**

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In addition to the seven specific landscapes identified as priority landscapes, which are described in the preceding section, Smithfield residents identified roughly 52 landscapes overall, many of which reflect issues that are common to all five communities participating in the Heritage Landscape Inventory. The full list of landscapes that were identified for Smithfield is in Appendix A, but the regional issues that they represent are summarized below.

### **Agricultural Landscapes**

Farmers are the stewards of agricultural landscapes that represent important scenic resources, provide fresh, locally grown food and other products to the community, and convey the agrarian lifestyle of days past. Loss of active farming and development of agricultural property were concerns of residents who attended meetings in each of the study area's five towns. Smithfield identified nine agricultural landscapes and is working on a mapping project which shows connections and continuity of multiple properties that make up large-scale landscapes.

Preservation of agricultural land is best addressed comprehensively by establishing priorities. Priorities will depend on the physical attributes of each farm; its economic viability; the wishes of the owner; and the importance of the farm to the community. In part those were the questions asked during the landscape identification meeting in each community.

### **Burial Grounds**

Each town in the study area has a large number of burial grounds, which are identified on a statewide list. The inventory lists 134 burial grounds or cemeteries in Smithfield, some of which were identified at the meeting as critical because they are often not known, not accessible and threatened by lack of maintenance or development. Many of these are small family burial grounds which are seriously overgrown and have damaged or missing monuments.

### **Civic and Institutional Properties**

Many historic buildings, such as schools, churches and granges, have outlived their primary or original function yet they are important as part of the historical record and often an important aspect of the visual and ephemeral character of the rural countryside or of a village center. Unless they have a valid present use, funds are typically not available to preserve them. Smithfield identified a meetinghouse, several churches, a library and a museum, and mentioned other property types in the context of their relationship to village centers.

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## **Lakes, Ponds and Reservoirs**

Bodies of water such as lakes, ponds and reservoirs, in each community of the study area, present challenges to nearby residents and to the town. Most lakes and ponds have a distinct historical background connected with early mills and recreational activities. Many reservoirs were dug to provide drinking water. They are part of the background story and important to the quality of life today. Challenges are the effects of present-day uses, which are more intense than in the past, and in many cases, are impacting water quality. Invasive species tend to thrive due to the high level of nitrates in the water often caused by lawn and farm fertilizers.

## **Local Scenic Roads**

One of the many ways that Smithfield residents see and enjoy their town is traveling along the public roads, many of which retain their historic alignment, narrow road width and scenic views over open fields. Stone walls line some of Smithfield's rural roads and delineate the boundaries of former agricultural fields. Qualities that make a road scenic are stone walls, mature trees, few curb cuts and views across fields. Threats are road widening, loss of trees and stone walls, and many new curb cuts.

## **Mill Villages**

Mill villages along the rivers enrich the landscape, but pose challenging issues, particularly when they include large mill structures which are underused or no longer occupied. Small mill structures are easier to adapt to new uses while large mill structures tend to face more difficult issues such as contamination, complex ownership structure, as well as utility and infrastructure voids that are problematic. In addition the dams associated with mills, many of which are privately owned but publicly regulated, can be costly to maintain and rebuild. With the absence of industrial uses and reuse of mill structures particularly for housing, there are new residents, some of whom may be less connected with the community due to work locations outside of Smithfield, but also there may be new residents who are interested in supporting community heritage and conservation issues.

## **Stone Walls**

Stone walls line roadways and cut across fields and woods marking property lines or outlining former pasture land, wood lots or other rural special places. They tend to have specific regional characteristics and contribute to the scenic and historic character of each and every community. In this northern region of Rhode Island stone walls are single and double width, of varying heights and are made of various sizes of rounded irregular fieldstones rather than flat fieldstones common to coastal regions in Rhode Island.

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## GENERAL PRESERVATION PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendations pertaining directly to the priority heritage landscapes can be found in the section that describes the specific landscape. This section of the Reconnaissance Report offers more general recommendations relevant to preserving the character of the community that are applicable to a wide range of community resources and that cover some of the “Regional Critical Concerns” discussed in the preceding section.

Smithfield’s residents place high value on the community's strong sense of place, which is created by its varied natural features and land use patterns that made use of the fertile land as well as the rivers and streams for water power.

The town is looking beyond the obvious resources to the more subtle values of landscapes, streetscapes, rural roads, mill village neighborhoods and other natural and cultural assets that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most municipalities, Smithfield is facing multiple pressures for change that threaten land-based uses and natural resources, especially its remaining farms and mill villages. Special places within the community that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to change.

Preservation planning is a three-step process: **identification, evaluation and protection**. It also is essential to form partnerships as no one entity and no one strategy is sufficient in effecting comprehensive preservation planning. In Rhode Island the RIHPHC ([www.preservation.ri.gov/](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/)), the BRVNHCC ([www.nps.gov/blac/](http://www.nps.gov/blac/)), Preserve Rhode Island (<http://preserveri.org>) and Grow Smart Rhode Island ([www.growsmartri.org](http://www.growsmartri.org)) all are significant partners in preservation that can provide education, planning strategies and technical assistance for preservation activities.

Rhode Island’s mandatory comprehensive planning – resulting in Comprehensive Plans that must be updated every five years – recognizes the importance of natural and historical resources which are discussed in their own section in the plans. Heritage landscapes have been addressed by some plans and less so by others; however, now is the time to incorporate them into the Comprehensive Plan. The inclusion will enhance the overall planning for these rich cultural aspects of each community.

Traditionally preservation planning has involved a limited set of strategies that target specific types of historic resources. However, a more comprehensive approach has been gaining recognition, leading preservation planners to better understand the way in which planning goals as reported in Comprehensive Plans and the local zoning code may impact the cultural resources of the town. To this end the recommendations include some proposed changes and additions to local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of resources are discussed below. These recommendations are listed in the order in which they are most logically addressed when applying the three-step preservation planning process as



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described above. Thus the goal will be to (1) identify, (2) evaluate, and (3) protect using traditional as well as more progressive strategies.

### **Survey of Heritage Landscapes**

While the heritage landscape inventory process helped to identify a wide range of resources that are valued by Smithfield residents, only the priority landscapes are described in any detail in this report. Thus the vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record more detailed information about these and other resources. One cannot advocate for something unless one knows precisely what it is – the physical characteristics and the historical development. It is this information that often engages the public in wanting to preserve resources.

While the first comprehensive historic resource documentation in Smithfield dates back nearly 40 years, there was some updating in 1979 and new documentation in 1986-87. More recently the town reviewed its survey and mapped the historic resources using GIS mapping in 2004. In addition the town adopted an ordinance in 2009 to form the Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission which has the responsibility to update and complete the Smithfield Historic Inventory.

Updating of the survey helps to illuminate properties' conditions and issues. The RIHPHC survey methodology is a starting point. Many of the heritage landscapes may be more critically understood with a cultural landscape identification approach as outlined by the National Park Service in Bulletin #30, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes* <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb30/>.

- Compile a list of resources that are under-represented or not sufficiently documented, beginning with the heritage landscapes already identified by the community.
- Document unprotected resources first, beginning with the most threatened resources.
- Make sure to document secondary features on rural and residential properties, such as outbuildings, stone walls, and landscape elements such as circulation networks, boundaries and land use patterns that are physically apparent.
- Record a wide range of historic resources including rural landscapes and industrial resources.
- Include heritage landscapes in the next Comprehensive Plan Update.

Ongoing community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey would help to identify patterns of ancient Native American and later European occupation and to identify known and probable locations of archaeological resources associated with these patterns. Known and potential ancient Native American and historic

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archaeological sites should be documented in the field for evidence of their cultural association and/or integrity. Care should be taken to keep archaeological site information in a secure location with restricted access.



*Georgiaville (BRVNHCC photo)*

### **National Register Program**

While the National Register does not automatically preserve a property, it does provide an opportunity for state review of proposed modifications in cases where federal or state monies or permits are being utilized.

Using the list of potentially National Register eligible properties that were included in the 1992 Report of Smithfield's Historic and Architectural Resources, Smithfield could expand its National Register of Historic Places program to augment the properties and districts already listed. The list of properties eligible but not yet listed is included in Appendix B.

The first step is to re-evaluate each property on the potentially eligible list in Appendix B of this report for eligibility, followed by developing a National Register listing plan, taking into consideration each property's integrity and vulnerability. Properties that are in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority. In addition evaluation of archaeological sites and other historic resources not on the 1992 list may yield additional potentially National Register eligible properties.

### **Community-Wide Preservation and Zoning Strategies**

Nearly all preservation strategies address village and neighborhood character in some manner. As described above, thorough documentation is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. Following identification and evaluation, each community looks for strategies to protect the special areas in the community. There are traditional preservation planning strategies and land use and planning strategies

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that have been used to support preservation. Some of the tools are described below.

**Local historic district zoning** is one of the most effective traditional preservation strategies in many Rhode Island communities. It is based on Rhode Island General Laws Title 45, Chapter 45-24.1 for *Historical Area Zoning*. A local historic district ordinance, which is adopted through a local initiative, recognizes special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by the designation. These districts are one of the strongest forms of protection for the preservation of historic resources. They are adopted by the Town Council.

**A demolition delay ordinance** provides a time period in which municipalities and property owners can explore alternatives to demolition. While relatively rare in Rhode Island, demolition delay ordinances are employed more widely in other states. Such ordinances allow communities to defer demolition of historic structures for an allotted period of time. This delay may help to deter developers and owners from demolishing historic structures that need new systems or are in the middle of a lot making it more challenging to subdivide. In Rhode Island demolition delay has only been adopted in a couple of communities and is part of the zoning ordinance. Smithfield is one of those communities and has adopted a 60-day delay period. See Appendix B.

**Neighborhood architectural conservation districts** are local initiatives that recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected. They are less restrictive than local historic districts but still embrace neighborhood character. These districts are used in many states across the nation and are similar to local historic district designation but less restrictive; regulations tend to address massing and scale rather than materials and architectural detail. However Rhode Island's state statute for local historic districting can be tailored to the needs of a community in a more flexible way than in many states. Therefore the flexibility and the less restrictive standards of a neighborhood architectural conservation district may be less applicable than in other states. Perhaps in instances where a local historic district ordinance has been written for one part of a neighborhood or village in a town, a neighborhood architectural conservation district may be more appropriate for another neighborhood where there is a need to embrace neighborhood character without the restrictive regulations of an already established local historic district.

**Conservation cluster development** seeks to preserve open space while allowing for the same building yield with more compact development. While most ordinances are similar in goals and implementation there may be ways to make this approach to subdivision more enticing or a requirement for large parcels in particular. This would be a particularly effective way in which to develop a large rural parcel. It is a method in which to preserve certain land uses as well. For parcels in large parcel zoning districts subdivision should require the submittal of a conventional subdivision plan and a conservation development plan. The reviewing board should be able to approve the better of the two plans and offer an additional unit or percentage of units based on the size of the land area and



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development size. The open space set aside could be farm land that remains in agricultural use. Smithfield has a Conservation Development Ordinance.

**Flexible zoning** gives the Planning Board the ability to shift some of the dimensional requirements in a subdivision in order to preserve certain features on a property such as key historic structures, stone walls, a stand of trees, or a promontory, as long as there is no increase in density.

**Overlay districts** provide a new set of rules for the development of land in a particular area that supersedes the underlying zoning can help to accomplish goals without creating a whole new zoning district. Overlay districts may be used to preserve certain vistas along rural roads, or certain development patterns in a village center.

### **Agricultural Landscapes**

Through its mapping project Smithfield has shown that the emphasis is on protecting multiple, connected properties and large-scale landscapes. As land use pressures intensify, farm owners now need multiple tools and partners to retain and work their land. Thus, preservation strategies require partnerships to assist in that stewardship.



*Waterman-Foster Orchard on Austin Avenue*

- Document historic barns and other farm outbuildings. Consider The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) “Barns in the Highland Communities” report as a model.
- Encourage owners to investigate the sale of development rights through the *Farmland Preservation Act* (Rhode Island General Law Chapter 42-82) administered by Department of Environmental Management’s Division of Agriculture.

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- Enroll farmland in program established by the *Farm, Forest and Open Space Act* (Rhode Island General Law Chapter 44-27) to ensure that the land is assessed at its farming use value rather than potential development use. Enrollment requires an approved conservation plan outlining best management practices.
  - Adopt the *Right to Farm Act* (Rhode Island General Law, Chapter 2-23) in order to support farmers when there are conflicts in adjacent land uses.
  - Form an *Agricultural Preservation Commission* to help advocate for farmers, develop zoning that is beneficial to farmers, and assist in implementing goals to preserve farming that appear in study area Comprehensive Plans and Updates.
  - Join *Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership*, a newly formed coalition with a mission to enhance agriculture and local food systems and develop a five-year strategic plan to sustain and improve agriculture in Rhode Island.
  - Support *Rhode Island Center for Agricultural Promotion and Education* [www.rifarmways.org](http://www.rifarmways.org) and its New England FarmWays program. This organization supports farmers in planning, research, management, marketing, local communication, tourism and other pertinent topics.

### **Burial Grounds**

While the Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Commission <http://www.historicalcemeteries.ri.gov/> has a data base of all of its burial grounds, in most cases very little is known about the historic resources, current ownership and existing conditions of each burial ground, particularly the smaller, less well-known ones.

- Map all burial grounds, which Smithfield has completed as a Geographic Information System (GIS) layer in its mapping program.
- Prepare updated inventory to identify burial grounds that are particularly vulnerable to change, followed by preservation plans for those that are at the highest risk.
- Consult organizations such as the Association for Gravestone Studies <http://www.gravestonestudies.org>, which are a good source of information for citizens interested in documenting burial grounds. Stone conservation work should only be undertaken by a trained conservator.
- Establish an Adopt-a-Cemetery program to provide care for burial grounds in poor condition.
- Adopt an ordinance that preserves and protects burial grounds and cemeteries as well as a buffer area around the same, similar to North Smithfield's *Preservation and Protection of Cemeteries or Burial Grounds* ordinance.



*Burial ground adjacent to Smith-Appleby house*

### **Civic and Institutional Properties**

Reuse of civic and institutional properties requires knowledge of land use regulations in the area, needs of the community and a conditions assessment of the property in order to understand cost and benefit of reuse options.

- Develop assessment report of building or structure to include architectural description, history, conditions, zoning, allowed uses, options, etc.
- Form friends groups to raise private funds to maintain civic and institutional properties and to solicit private partners such as local businesses to assist in funding preservation of historic civic and institutional buildings.
- Arrange adaptive reuse charrette to brainstorm about ways in which to preserve under-used or vacant buildings.

### **Lakes, Ponds, and Reservoirs**

Preservation of waterbodies such as lakes, ponds and reservoirs takes cooperation among abutters and other users of the waterbodies. Some of the challenge is lack of information about the ill-effects of certain types of activities.

- Develop water-quality testing program. Advertise results with interpretive information.
- Develop brochure for property owners on methods of protecting water quality by not using chemicals on lawns, etc. This type of educational information can be general for all water sources and personalized to the specific resource with photographs and facts about the water source.

An important partner in solutions for waterbodies may be *Save the Lakes* ([www.stlri.org](http://www.stlri.org)), an organization dedicated to preserving and improving fresh

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water in Rhode Island. Workshops presented by the organization have included information about backyard sustainable landscaping practices that protect the quality of water.

### **Local Scenic Roads**

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of a community. They are highly valued by residents and visitors alike. Yet, roads must also accommodate modern transportation needs and decisions regarding roadways are often made with travel requirements as the only consideration. The visual quality of a road is made up of characteristics that are within the public right-of-way and those that are on private property including tree canopies, stone walls and views across open fields. Rhode Island has a Scenic Roadways program for the designation and preservation of scenic state roads. Only eight roads have been so designated one of which is in Lincoln – one of the towns participating in the Heritage Landscape Inventory program. The local Highway Department can request designation of a particular state road or sections thereof; however that would not apply to the many winding rural roads that are evocative of Smithfield's agricultural past. The best protection is for the town to adopt a local designation process with an ordinance that provides review for certain actions that may change the scenic quality of roads.

Protection of scenic roads therefore requires more than one approach.

- Complete an inventory with descriptions and photo documentation of each of the roads in Smithfield including the character-defining features that should be retained.
- Adopt design criteria to be considered when approving removal of trees and stone walls, such as a provision allowing only one driveway cut per property on scenic roads. This is particularly applicable to subdivisions and not appropriate for working farms that often require multiple entrances. Once adopted, coordinate procedures between the Highway Department and the Planning Board that reviews subdivisions.
- Consider a scenic overlay district that may provide a no-disturb buffer on private property bordering on scenic roads or adopt flexible zoning standards to protect certain views.
- Develop local policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstructions, which address the scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety. This is an important public process in which the community may have to accept responsibility for certain costs to implement standards that are not acceptable to projects funded by Rhode Island Department of Transportation. Such standards should have a section addressing the way in which the local Highway Department maintains roads, for example requiring a public hearing if any trees or stone walls are to be removed or if additional pavement is to be added to a town road during reconstruction or repair. Policies can be adopted by local boards having jurisdiction over roads, or can

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be adopted through an ordinance passed by the Town Council. In developing policies consider factors such as road width, clearing of shoulders, walking paths, posted speeds. A delicate balance is required.

### **Mill Villages**

Preservation strategies appropriate for mill villages often support economic development due to the cohesiveness of villages and the character of many of the buildings. To maintain the size, scale and massing within the village as well as preserve distinctive building types, local historic district designation is the most effective tool. Other zoning strategies may help to make large mill buildings more viable such as: overlay districts that may provide additional allowed uses; and flexible zoning that may allow flexibility in dimensional requirements. The Rhode Island Historic Homeowner's Tax Credit can be an important preservation tool for residences that are listed in the National Register, providing homeowners with a 20% tax credit for approved, exterior restoration work. The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit provides tax incentives for the rehabilitation of income-producing properties, as does the state Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit (currently unavailable but could be re-instituted).

### **Stone Wall Preservation**

Stone walls are vulnerable to development of rural parcels, widening of rural roads and even as a source of revenue. There are two mechanisms that have been used in some Rhode Island communities – one is an incentive, the other is a regulation.

A state statute (R.I.G.L. § 44-3-43) provides a valuation exemption of up to \$5,000 that can be subtracted from the assessed value of a property that retains its stone walls. A municipality must adopt an ordinance to take advantage of this state statute. Within this statute the definition of “historic stone walls” is those stone walls that pre-date 1900 and are a vertical alignment of natural stones. The tax exemption can only be applied to walls that are at least three feet in height, at least 50 feet in length and are maintained.

Four communities in Rhode Island have developed regulatory ordinances that provide a modicum of protection. Each relies on the definition of “historic stone walls” in the tax exemption statute. Smithfield has adopted an ordinance that has become the model for other communities - the Smithfield Stone Wall Protection and Preservation Ordinance. This law gives the legal authority to the municipality to fine an owner who removes stone walls without necessary permits or conditions in a permit. Other communities in this study area are working to adopt an ordinance similar to Smithfield's.

### **Funding of Preservation Projects**

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing preservation strategies. Both the RIHPHC and BRVNHCC have limited funding programs to assist communities in preservation-related issues. Communities that have adopted historic district zoning are eligible for Certified Local Government

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(CLG) status. Once designated a CLG by the RIHPHC, the community is eligible for some survey and planning grants through the RIHPHC. Smithfield would not be eligible for CLG designation until it adopts an Historic District Zoning Ordinance. Other funding sources include:

- *Preservation is Local* grants for planning and documentation projects often leveraged with CLG funding – grant program only operated in 2009 and future is unknown. RIHPHC Program.
- *Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)* funds for improving community facilities, neighborhood revitalization, and economic development. A limited funding source particularly for non-entitlement communities which includes all five towns in the study area.
- The *Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC)* can make a difference in the financing of a project that is completing a substantial rehabilitation of an income producing property that is listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. A “certified rehabilitation” that is carried out in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation is eligible for a 20% investment tax credit. RIHPHC for information.
- The *Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credit* is presently not funded but may be re-instituted. It played a significant role in preserving many important historic resources and was particularly useful in the redevelopment of large mill structures. RIHPHC Program.
- The *Historic Homeowner's Tax Credit* can assist owners in the cost for rehabilitating their National Register-listed home. RIHPHC Program.
- Local funding sources such as the real estate conveyance tax payable to municipalities may be redirected to preservation of heritage landscapes such as agricultural land. Use of these funds is community policy determined at the local level. Other sources may be local businesses that may benefit from preservation of property.

Funding for state programs varies from year to year. When planning Smithfield's heritage landscape inventory program, contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding is available.

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## CONCLUSIONS

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The Smithfield Reconnaissance Report is a critical tool in starting to identify the town's rich and diverse heritage landscapes and in beginning to think about preservation strategies. Smithfield will have to determine the best way to implement the recommendations discussed above. One approach that may help the town begin the process is for the recently appointed Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission to include heritage landscapes in its inventory of historic resources and thus create a comprehensive historic resource inventory. The HPC is an appropriate lead agency to guide implementation of recommendations of this report.

Landscapes identified in this report, especially the priority landscapes, will typically need further documentation. That documentation in turn can be used in publicity efforts to build consensus and gather public support for their preservation. Implementation of recommendations will require a concerted effort that includes partnerships among municipal boards and agencies, local non-profit organizations, and state agencies and commissions.

Distribution of this Reconnaissance Report to the municipal land use boards and commissions will assist in making this one of the planning documents that guides Smithfield in preserving important features of the community's character. The recommended tasks will require cooperation and coordination among boards and commissions, particularly Smithfield's Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Historic Preservation Commission. It also is advisable to present this information to the Town Council. Distribution of the report to the Smithfield Land Trust, neighborhood associations and any other preservation-minded organizations such as the Historical Society of Smithfield will broaden the audience and assist in gathering interest and support for Smithfield's heritage landscapes. Finally, this report should be distributed to the owners of landscapes identified through this process, especially the high-priority landscapes. This could help owners understand the significance of their property, its importance to the community, and options for protection.

## APPENDIX A: HERITAGE LANDSCAPES IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY

This list was generated by local participants at the Heritage Landscape Identification Meeting held in Smithfield on June 17, 2010. The follow-up fieldwork was completed on June 30, 2010. **There are undoubtedly many other heritage landscapes that were not identified at the HLI meeting noted above.** The chart has two columns, the names and locations of resources are in the first; notes about resources are in the second. Landscapes are grouped by land use category. Abbreviations are listed below.

CR = Conservation Restriction

LHD = Local Historic District

NR = National Register

PR = Preservation Restriction

\* = Priority Landscape

Agriculture	
<b>* Austin Avenue Farms</b>	Several contiguous farms that make up a multiple property connected heritage landscape of agricultural fields, orchards, historic farmhouses and some outbuildings.
<b>Connors Farm Conservation Area</b> Connors Farm Drive	Town-owned 66-acre property with a two-mile trail. Area is mostly wooded with pond, brook, dams, old stone bridge and glacial ledges. Formerly the Connors Family Farm. This conservation area is contiguous to the Jim Russell Conservation Area, the Judson Farm and the Hyde Tree Farm forming a 214-acre conservation district.
<b>Eleanor Hoar Farm</b> 159 Austin Avenue	Actively farmed 1687 through 1980s, now becoming overgrown. Part of the Steere dairy farm on Mapleville Plateau, together with present Leach farm and Steere Family Orchard, in early 20 <sup>th</sup> century all making up the Austin Avenue Farms, which is a priority heritage landscape. Ca. 1920s farmhouse, dairy barn, barn foundation and several outbuildings owned by Hoar family since the 1930s or 1940s as well as vistas over agricultural fields that now are fallow.
<b>Hyde's Tree Farm</b> 215 Mann School Road	Thomas Mann House named for brother of educator, Horace Mann. First school in area in attic here. Late 18 <sup>th</sup> C. house is one and one-half story center chimney. Now a 67-acre farm that grows and sells Christmas trees. NR eligible according to 1992 RIHPHC report on Smithfield historic resources.
<b>Jaswell's Farm</b> 50 Swan Road	Orchards, seasonal fruits and vegetables, u-pick, farmstand, bakery. Farm started 1899 by Nicola Gesualdi.
<b>Matteo's Farm</b> 90 Swan Road	Farmhouse on 53 acres of inactive orchard and farm land. Smithfield Land Trust recently reached an agreement to purchase 50 acres leaving three acres with farmhouse for present owners. Plans are to return acreage to agricultural use possibly through a lease to a local farmer.



<b><i>Stephen Steere Farm</i></b> 56 Capron Rd	Hilltop farm overlooking Woonasquatucket Valley with ca. 1825-30 Federal style farmhouse built by Stephen Steere. Barns, silo, agricultural landscape of note in Smithfield. A section of Capron Road, including this property, has been determined eligible for National Register listing as a historic district by RIHPHC.
<b><i>* Captain Elisha Steere Farm</i></b> 40 West Greenville Rd	Farmhouse built ca. 1810 by Thomas Waterman. Other buildings include milk house/shop, corncrib, carriage barn. Property purchased 1810 by Steere family, which has owned it ever since. Currently about 68 acres, 30 of which are being farmed. Frontage on Waterman Lake.
<b><i>Steere Family Orchard</i></b> 150 Austin Ave	Agricultural fields. Farmed since 1687. Steere orchard (apple and peaches) was founded in 1930, included 100 acres. Orchards still active. Ca. 1930s storehouse of molded concrete block with parapet wall located opposite Mapleville Rd. Smithfield Land Trust purchased conservation easement on 20 acres of orchard land in 2010. Part of the Austin Avenue Farms – a priority heritage landscape.
<b><i>Waterman-Foster Farm</i></b> 147 Austin Ave	Two and one-half story Georgian farmhouse built in ca. 1743. First known occupant was Resolved Waterman – later owned by John Foster who grew corn and had a dairy farm (largest producer of corn and butter in Smithfield in late 19 <sup>th</sup> century). Property was at one time part of Steere farm. Existing orchards 75 years old, planted by Steere family. Current owner is restoring the house, has been cultivating the orchard and has plans for a farm stand. Part of the Austin Avenue Farms – a priority heritage landscape.
<b>Burial Grounds and Cemeteries</b>	
<b><i>Burial Grounds</i></b>	134 historic burying grounds in town, including small family plots and large village cemeteries. GPS locations are noted on town map.
<b>Centers/Villages</b>	
<b><i>* Esmond</i></b> Esmond Street	On Woonasquatucket River, originally known as Allenville for first mill owner here who established cotton mill in 1813. Original mill is gone – one stone storehouse survives and mill housing, some of the earliest in the state. Also includes Esmond Park, a popular four-acre scenic spot along the river. Strong sense of place. Reportedly there are 127 buildings listed in the inventory of the village. Pressure from development spreading out from Route 44 corridor.
<b><i>Georgiaville</i></b> Farnum Turnpike	NR – Georgiaville Historic District. On Woonasquatucket River and Farnum Turnpike with first stone mill built in 1813 – all replaced in 1853 with large Georgiaville Factory, stone boarding houses and many other mill village buildings.

<b>* Greenville</b> Putnam Pike	Civic and institutional center. More of a crossroads village than the typical mill village as there was little that was company-owned until you got out to West Greenville.
<b>Hanton City</b> Hanton City Road	Behind Fidelity Investments campus. Was a late 17 <sup>th</sup> C. farming village, now just ruins. Some is protected and some is private. Large undeveloped tract of land.
<b>Spragueville</b> Pleasant View Ave	On Stillwater River. Granite mill that burned in 1902 with only a few houses remaining from village.
<b>Stillwater</b> Stillwater Road	Built around a cotton mill that later was a woolen mill – small compact village where all residents were dependent on woolen mill, which burned in the recent past. A private conservation-minded group has acquired dam and mill remnants.
<b>Civic / Institutional / Commercial</b>	
<b>Bryant University</b> 1151 Douglas Pike	Smithfield campus established 1970-71 for college founded in 1863 that was located in Providence until purchase of Smithfield land from Earl Tupper of Tupper Company. Three historic houses on 220-acre campus.
<b>East Smithfield Public Library</b> 50 Esmond Street	In Esmond Village. An anchor to village. An early 20 <sup>th</sup> C. Colonial Revival school. Not included in the 1992 <i>Historic and Architectural Resources of Smithfield</i> .
<b>Greenville Baptist Church</b> 582 Putnam Pike	1820 and later additions, displaying quintessential meetinghouse form. The building was raised onto its high brick foundation in 1866. In village of Greenville – church owns the adjacent small common.
<b>Old St. Philip's Catholic Church</b> 28 Smith Street	1858. First Catholic church in Greenville and used until mid 20 <sup>th</sup> C. when new church built. Has been determined eligible for National Register listing by RIHPHC
<b>St. Thomas Episcopal Church</b> 578 Putnam Pike	NR – Individually Listed. Stone Gothic Revival 1851 church in Greenville designed by Rhode Island architect, Thomas Tefft. Bell tower replaced a bell gable in 1891.
<b>Resolved Waterman Tavern Ell</b> 599 Putnam Pike	NR – Individual Listed. Originally a rear ell of the ca. 1713 Resolved Waterman Tavern where in 1822 the Smithfield Exchange Bank was established and a vault was installed in the tavern ell (this structure). Bank functioned here until 1856. Tavern which was a stage coach stop along road from Providence to Chepachet was demolished in 1936 when Putnam Pike widened. Recent grant towards restoration.

<b><i>Smith-Appleby Property</i></b> 220 Stillwater Rd	NR – Individually Listed. This was one of the early farms in Smithfield that was purchased by the Smithfield Historical Society in 1974 and now is a museum. Its agricultural roots began in ca. 1713 when the first part of the house was constructed. Was the location of Smith Mills on the Woonasquatucket River. Includes two barns and old depot moved to site, agricultural fields and family burial ground.
<b><i>Smithfield Union Chapel</i></b> 60 Branch Pike	1859. Built as Central Union Church in a one-story building and chartered as Smithfield Union Society in 1862. In 1900 name changed to Union Chapel of Smithfield.
<b>Industrial</b>	
<b><i>Esmond Mills</i></b> Waterman Ave	On west side of Woonasquatucket River - 1906 mill building replacing earlier ones. Still in active use. In Esmond Village which is Priority Landscape.
<b><i>Georgiaville Dam and Raceway</i></b>	NR – part of Georgiaville Historic District – important aspect of mill power. First dam at this location in 1813 with an 18’ drop of water – in 1853 rebuilt with a 36’ drop. Raceway is west of dam and ran under a building providing power.
<b><i>Georgiaville Mill Complex</i></b> Higgins Rd	NR – part of Georgiaville Historic District. Large mill complex with central building constructed in 1853 – earlier and later buildings nearby. Now condominiums.
<b><i>Quarry</i></b>	Near Meadow Park.
<b><i>West Greenville Mill</i></b>	Well preserved mill – dam and sluiceway here too.
<b>Native American</b>	
<b><i>* Nipsachuck Battle Area</i></b>	Site of 17 <sup>th</sup> century battles between regional Tribes and Colonists. In 8,000+ acre Nipsachuck Swamp area that also extends into North Smithfield. Study of area currently underway.
<b>Natural / Open Space / Parks</b>	
<b><i>* Camp Shepard</i></b> 71 Colwell Road	Owned by Providence YMCA, 114 acres. Summer day camp for inner-city children. Has important location on Upper Sprague Reservoir. Some concern that the Y might sell it.

<b><i>Cedar Swamp</i></b> Cedar Swamp Rd.	South of Mountindale Reservoir. Behind Benny's Store Northwest of Route 44 and 5 intersection, partially visible across from A & W on 44 and near the Lutheran Church on Cedar Swamp Road (Route 5). The swamp used to be frequented by botanists for its unusual vegetation. Most of the land is privately owned. The Town owns a 13-acre parcel that borders the swamp at the end of Willow Road and contains a baseball field.
<b><i>Deerfield Park</i></b> Greenville	Town-owned recreation area with veterans' memorial and senior center.
<b><i>Georgiaville Dam and Gorge</i></b> Georgiaville	NR – Part of Georgiaville Historic District. Also dramatic gorge adjacent to dam.
<b><i>Jim Russell Conservation Area</i></b> Burlingame Road	Wooded 43-acre parcel with streams and trails owned by the Smithfield Land Trust.
<b><i>Mowry Conservation Area</i></b> Old Forge Road	Wooded 44-acre parcel along Woonasquatucket River with trout stream, footbridge, picnic tables and hiking trails. Includes industrial archaeology associated with 18 <sup>th</sup> century forge and sawmill. Land was owned by the Mowry family since 1800s. Owned by Smithfield Land Trust and managed by the Conservation Commission. The Mowry family recently left the family farm to the Land Trust which includes 19 acres of fields and a 5.27 acre lot containing the homestead located across Old Forge Road south of the conservation area.
<b><i>Powder Mill Ledges Wildlife Refuge</i></b> 12 Sanderson Rd.	120-acre refuge is headquarters of RI Audubon Society. Scenic area with hiking trails.
<b><i>* George Washington Grove</i></b> Geo. Washington Tpke	Grove is located next to Stillwater Park, which is 80 protected acres. Grove is 16 acres of surplus DOT land that is not well protected. The Grove was a CCC-built roadside picnic area established in the 1930s. Has been closed for use, considered surplus land.
<b><i>Wolf Hill Forest Preserve</i></b> Mountindale Rd.	Wolf Hill, when combined with adjacent Mercer Lookout property, is 318 acres. Wolf Hill Preserve extends north to Pleasant View Avenue. Trailhead located near the Conservation Center. Owned by the Smithfield Land Trust.
<b>Residential</b>	
<b><i>Cavanaugh Property</i></b> 251 Log Road	Ca. 1840 farmhouse on a 12-acre parcel with frontage on Stump Pond. Recently a conservation easement on the parcel was purchased by the Smithfield Land Trust. House was not included in the 1992 report of survey work. Residential property with bleaching stone.

<b><i>J.S. Sweet Octagon House</i></b> 108 Farnum Pike	Georgiaville, but outside NR Historic District. Ca. 1865, two stories with bracketed cornice.
<b>Transportation</b>	
<b><i>Douglas Turnpike</i></b>	Straightest road in Rhode Island. Chartered in 1805 and laid out in 1808 as Providence and Douglas Turnpike. Maintains its same route – road was covered with macadam in early 20 <sup>th</sup> C. Toll road with gate at Brayton Road called “Angell’s Gate.”
<b><i>Harris Road</i></b>	Scenic views with stone walls, farms and old road.
<b><i>Longhouse Bridge</i></b> West Greenville	1920s bridge in West Greenville. There are similar bridges in town such as the Esmond Bridge on Farnum Pike.
<b><i>North Central State Airport</i></b> 300 Jenkes Hill Rd	Located in the northeast part of Smithfield near the Lincoln town line the 633-acre airport has significant open and green space zoned for industrial uses that would change the character of the area if developed. Original airport of 900+ acres dedicated as State airport in 1951.
<b><i>Providence &amp; Springfield Railroad</i></b>	Railroad bed from 1873 – raised and can be followed although no longer in use. Scenic walking trails – bike paths have not been well received.
<b><i>Stillwater Road Bridge</i></b>	1900 pony truss bridge carrying road over Woonasquatucket River. This has been moved out of town and reused at a park in Valley Falls, Cumberland.
<b><i>Stillwater Viaduct</i></b> George Washington Highway	Concrete viaduct built in 1933 to span Woonasquatucket River and Providence & Springfield RR. This bridge is slated for rehabilitation. Known as Stillwater Viaduct, Number 278.
<b>Waterbodies</b>	
<b><i>Seville Pond</i></b> Near Rts 44 and 295	In Esmond. Stagnant pond in area vulnerable to development.
<b><i>Town Beach</i></b> Georgiaville	Southern end of Georgiaville Pond. Swimming, fishing, picnicking. Also ca. 1850 dam with gorge below.
<b><i>Upper Sprague Reservoir</i></b>	Including Camp Shepard. A 25-acre reservoir constructed in 1836 to help power the mills.

## **APPENDIX B: EXISTING RESOURCE DOCUMENTATION AND PLANNING TOOLS**

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Smithfield already has important planning tools in place to document current conditions within the town; identify issues of concern to town residents; and develop strategies for action. This section of the Reconnaissance Report identifies some of the existing planning documents and tools that provide information relevant to preserving heritage landscapes in the community.

### **Survey of Historic and Architectural Resources**

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission's (RIHPHC) Inventory of Historic and Architectural Resources is a statewide program that identifies significant historic resources in each municipality in the State. Historic properties are listed on RIHPHC data sheets, which record the basic information about properties: descriptions, location recorded on historic maps, and names associated with the property.

Early survey work in Smithfield was done in 1970-71 and in 1979. Smithfield properties were restudied and recorded in 1986-87 and analyzed in *Historic and Architectural Resources of Smithfield, Rhode Island* published in 1992. Some properties have been preserved using recommendations included in the Report; others have been altered or lost; and still others remain undocumented.

Landscape survey work of the 1980s led to the published 2001 report *Historic Landscapes in Rhode Island* which describes seven farms, four on Austin Avenue, and refers to Austin Avenue as the Orchard District. There are many archaeological sites that have been documented and are on file at the RIHPHC.

In 2003-2004 Smithfield's historic sites including known historic cemeteries were mapped as part of the Woonasquatucket Greenspace Protection Strategy. For the most part, only those properties that had already been mapped by Rhode Island Geographic Information System [RIGIS] were included along with those listed in the National Register of Historic Places or those that had been determined eligible. Team members from Smithfield reviewed the survey documentation and the 1992 RIHPHC published report to identify other important historic sites that should be included in the mapping project. Survey work now is the responsibility of the Historic Preservation Commission, established by ordinance in 2009. It is to be called the Smithfield Historic Inventory.

Finally the Smithfield Land Trust has been working with the owner of the Captain Elisha Steere Farm on a mapping project entitled "West Greenville Agricultural Conservation Project, Map Parcel Descriptions" which shows the relationship of the many agricultural landscapes in the Greenville area.

### **State and National Registers of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. Smithfield has only one National Register district:

- Georgiaville HD (1985)

Nine properties are individually listed in the National Register including:

- Waterman-Winsor Farm, 79 Austin Avenue (1980)
- Stephen Winsor House, 93 Austin Avenue (1975)
- Allenville Mill Company Storehouse, 5 Esmond Street (1972)

- Ira B. Sweet House, 38 Esmond St. (2010)
- Woonasquatucket River Site, (RI-163), Farnum Pike (1984)
- Angell-Ballou House, 49 Ridge Road (2004)
- Smithfield Exchange Bank, 599 Putnam Pike (2006)
- St. Thomas Church, Putnam Pike (1987)
- Smith-Appleby Farm, Stillwater Road (1974)

The 1992 Preliminary Report of Smithfield's Historic and Architectural Resources recommended consideration of several districts and many individual properties for inclusion in the National Register. Although there has been some National Register activity none on the 1992 list has been nominated. One district and one individual property have been added to this list because of determinations of eligibility made by the RIHPHC. The list of properties that should be considered for National Register listing includes:

- Daniel Winsor House, 129 Austin Avenue
- Jesse Foster House, 147 Austin Avenue
- Capron Road Historic District, Capron Road
- Stephen Steere House, 56 Capron Road
- Tucker-Steere-Colwell House, Pole 77, Colwell Road
- Angell's Hotel, 620 Douglas Pike
- Joseph Mowry House, 1150 Douglas Pike
- Silas Smith House, 200 Farnum Pike
- Harris House, 135 Harris Road
- Mowry House, 239 John Mowry Road
- Col. Elisha Mowry House, 10 John Mowry Road
- Asahel Angell House, 4 Limerock Road
- Daniel Angell House, 26 Limerock Road
- Thomas Mann House, 215 Mann School Road
- Ebenezer Stephens House, 185 Old County Road
- Joseph Farnum-Brown House, 243 Old County Road
- Ballou-Phetteplace House, 142 Pleasant View Avenue
- Steere-Harris House, 310 Pleasant View Avenue
- Hopkins Farm, Pole 9, Branch Pike
- Richard Waterhouse House, 649 Putnam Pike
- Old St. Philips Catholic Church, 28 Smith Street
- Mathewson House, 3S Steere Road
- Evans House, Pole 2, Tarkiln Road
- Steere Farm, 40 West Greenville Road
- Windy Brow Farm, 82 Williams Road

The 2007 Update to the town's Comprehensive Plan recommended that the town work with the Smithfield Historical Society to document properties considered potentially eligible. This task will now be taken over by the recently appointed Smithfield Historical Commission.

## Planning Documents and Tools

All municipalities in Rhode Island are required to write a Comprehensive Plan and to update that plan every five years. The town's latest update to the *Smithfield Comprehensive Plan* was adopted in 2007. The Update recommends adoption of a Forest/Woodland Conservation Ordinance. It would require that

all developments preserve a percentage of the woodland or forest on a lot. The 2007 Update also recommends continued vigilance in identifying funds to purchase development rights or restrictions on farmland or find other ways to preserve this resource that is the community character.

Smithfield also has other important planning documents that provide a framework for town decision making. Important regulatory accomplishments in Smithfield that are related to community character and heritage landscapes are:

**Conservation Development Zoning.** A mechanism by which to develop land by clustering the development together on small lots or one lot in residential districts and providing a percentage of open space in return for being able to cluster the development, which reduces infrastructure costs. The 2007 Update states that “Conservation Development will greatly improve Town’s ability to guide development away from critical natural and cultural resources while increasing the stock of conservation properties.”

**Demolition Delay** Smithfield’s demolition delay ordinance is part of the Historic Preservation Commission ordinance adopted in 2009. It provides a 60-day period during which the Smithfield Historic Preservation Commission shall consider whether the demolition of a property for which a demolition permit has been sought is “consistent with the historical, architectural and cultural preservation goals of the town. Properties subject to the demolition delay are those that are in Smithfield’s inventory of historic resources.

**Stone Wall Protection and Preservation Ordinance.** This ordinance seeks to preserve stone walls along roads and on farm land by requiring certain permits in order to remove stone walls. Smithfield is one of four in the state to adopt this type of ordinance and it is being used as a model elsewhere.

**Woodland Conservation Ordinance.** This ordinance adopted in September of 2009, regulates tree clearing on commercial properties and within certain buffer areas of residential subdivisions.

As mentioned above in the Survey section of this Appendix, Smithfield was one of six municipalities that participated in the 2003-04 Woonasquatucket Greenspace Protection Strategy project. Of the six municipalities that participated Gloucester, North Smithfield and Smithfield also are included in this Heritage Landscape Inventory program. The Woonasquatucket project looked at regional issues relating to the Woonasquatucket River watershed using the Comprehensive Plan outline as a guide. An important product of this project was the understanding of the complexity of heritage landscapes –the overlapping categories as well as overlapping municipal boundaries – and the importance of a regional approach to preserve and protect this heritage. Recommendations for each category – natural resources, cultural resources, and recreational resources – are guides to heritage landscape preservation priorities in this watershed. A product of this project was defining “cultural priority areas.”

Finally, Smithfield voted a \$5 million bond issue to be used for open space and agricultural preservation. Nearly all has been spent on conservation easements and out-right purchase of farms and orchards (mostly inactive) that were threatened by subdivision.